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# Transforming Professional Learning Using Self-Study in an EFL Context

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# Transforming Professional Learning Using Self-study in an EFL Context

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# Overview

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Introduction

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Theoretical Framework

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# INTRODUCTION

- Reflective practices: Means to practitioner's professional growth

- Necessity of understanding complex nature of teaching & learning

Self-study as an effective means:

- *...self-study demands that the knowledge and understanding derived be communicated ...so that it might be challenged, extended, transformed and translated by others...it is available for such public critique and dissemination, rather than solely residing in the mind of an individual (Loughran, 2004, p.25-26).*

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## PURPOSE



- Address issue of written corrective feedback (WCF) in student writings forming faculty learning community (FLC)
- Explore beliefs about WCF



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are our own beliefs about effective WCF in EFL student writings?
- What practices do we engage in when we provide WCF?
- How can we develop our own techniques of WCF that our EFL students find effective?



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Dewey's (1938) concept of **experience**:

*Teaching and learning are continuous processes of reconstruction of experience (p. 111).*



# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand instructors' beliefs,

*Self-study is a powerful tool for uncovering and discovering [their] underlying values and the manner in which actions and beliefs intertwine (Childs, 2005, p.143).*

Learning from others' experiences provides

*broadly creative opportunities for shaping ... own research journeys and decision-making not templates to be imitated (Mullen & Kealy, 2005, p. 156-157).*





# METHODOLOGY



- **Collaborative self-study**: drawing on multiple data sources & a critical friend (Laboskey, 2004)
- No 'template' exists: methodologically framed (Loughran, 2004)
- Peer review, commentary, & critique to establish robust & defensible forms of inquiry (Clarke & Erickson, 2004)



## CONTEXT

Critical friendship maintained,  
relying on digital technology

Instructor researcher 1: doctoral  
student in a midwestern university

Instructor researcher II: Instructor in  
a private university in Bangladesh



# METHODS

Prompt-based reflective writings:	Reflection involves questioning taken-for-granted assumptions & encourages alternative perspectives (Loughran, 2002)
Prompt-based discussions:	Interrogation promotes deeper level of personal & intellectual inquiry (Anderson et al., 2014)
Review of WCF literature:	Literature review confirms/disconfirms beliefs & results in social construction of knowledge (Hoban, 2004)
Exchange of e-mails:	Such communication become artifacts to analyze & development of ideas (Berry & Crowe, 2009)



## DATA ANALYSIS

Open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

Analytic themes developed from:  
reflective journals/transcriptions of  
online discussions/e-mail exchanges

Developed themes reviewed by both

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## FINDINGS

- **RQ 1:** What are our own beliefs about effective WCF in EFL student writings?
  - (a) Assessment of learning rather than knowledge
  - (b) Necessity of promoting independent learning



# Assessment of learning vs. knowledge



## Similar


*...it's a common practice to assign various kinds of tasks to evaluate what the students have learned from a particular course and grade their work...We should be objective and try not to be harsh so that the students learn to take the criticism positively and work on it to improve. (Mousume)*

*I believe it is extremely important for me as the instructor at the receiving end (of the message) to develop a kind of relationship through feedback that supports and facilitates the development of the students' writing processes and skill as well...keep[ing] in mind that writing tasks provide students opportunities to work constructively... (Mahjabeen)*

## Contrasting

*A student is supposed to have a clear idea about what his strength(s) and weakness(es) so that he can improve... I think we should comment on the strengths and weaknesses in such a way that it justifies the grade that a student receives. (Mousume)*





## Necessity of promoting independent learning

*By keeping in mind that writing tasks provide students opportunities to work constructively... I believe WCF should: promote awareness of repeated errors, include language/comments that students can comprehend, provide alternative answers, point out strength of the writing also, provide information for resources (to improve), identify the kind of error made...(Mahjabeen)*

*...as a teacher this is a kind of responsibility that we have to guide them...Clearly, they should learn to be an independent writer or independent thinker but we have to prepare them. We can't just do that at the very beginning. (Mousume)*



## Findings: RQ I

- **Learning Outcomes**

Realization: Environment influences beliefs

Realization: Our inability to recognize contradictions

- Critical friendship promotes honest examination & self-realization

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# Findings

**RQ II:** What practices do we engage in when we provide WCF?

- (a) Teacher-oriented factors
- (b) Psychological/internal factors & contextual/external factors



Teacher-oriented factors:  
expectations,  
intuition,  
observation &  
learning  
experience

Strategies that I have employed have basically emerged from my perceptions and observation of student response to them and the level of engagement necessary on their part. First, as I began to have more diverse group of learners, I found the necessity of resorting to different modes of WCF... Second,...level of directness of feedback has differed from one student to another depending on how I perceive each student would benefit from direct or indirect speech acts. (Mahjabeen)

What are the effective ways for WCF? I think this is an ongoing process... Every time we implement something, we learn something, we come up with new strategies. (Mousume)

## Psychological/ internal factors & Contextual/ external factors

...psychological factors that are primarily internal to and under the control of the learner rather than conditioned habits include (1) cognitive and metacognitive factors, (2) motivational and affective factors, (3) developmental and social factors, and (4) individual factors.....the external environment or contextual factors that interact with these internal factors cannot be overlooked...Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices. (Mahjabeen)

I can see that I have made several changes over the time, depending on the level of performance of the students or the nature of errors or the objective of the task, or the academic or psychological needs of the students.  
(Mousume)





## Findings: RQ II

- **Learning Outcomes**

Realization: Teachers must make autonomous choices

Realization: No single way; strategies are contextually-driven

Realization: Internal & external factors interact



# Findings

**(a)RQ III:** How can we develop our own techniques of WCF that our EFL students find effective?

- Dismantling of deep-rooted, unchallenged beliefs
- Recognition of usefulness of reflection
- Perceiving usefulness of culture of inquiry
- Increased self-awareness
- Readiness to adapt to changes
- Integrating evidence-based practices & learner involvement
- Necessity of self-initiated communities of practice
- Conceptualizing context-driven approach



## Findings: RQ III

- **Learning Outcomes**

Realization: gain distant view of teaching & learning situation

Realization: “reframing” (Schön, 1983) less difficult in collaboration

Realization: self-disclosure through self-reflection

Realization: seek opportunities for meaningful professional growth

Realization: conception of context-sensitive instructional approach

- Critical reflection: connection between teaching & research



## CONCLUSION

Faculty members appropriate sources of learning outcomes

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Institutional accountability not conducive to collaborative inquiry

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Non-threatening environment supports a culture of inquiry

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Collaborative inquiry empowers faculty

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Ongoing need to view teaching & learning situation from different perspectives

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*Thank you!*